



**State Court Administrative Office  
Child Welfare Services Division**



**Michigan Foster Care Review Board  
2015 Annual Report**





## Michigan Supreme Court

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Milton L. Mack, Jr.  
State Court Administrator

### Memorandum

TO: Governor Rick Snyder  
Lt. Governor Brian N. Calley  
Honorable Members of the Michigan Legislature

FROM: Milton L. Mack, Jr.  
State Court Administrator

DATE: September 16, 2016

SUBJECT: 2015 Foster Care Review Board Annual Report

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Attached please find the 2015 Annual Report of the Foster Care Review Board (FCRB). Established by statute in 1984, the FCRB provides independent third-party review of cases in the state child foster care system. The State Court Administrative Office provides support to this group of citizen volunteers who are dedicated to ensuring that children are safe and well cared for while in the foster care system.

This report, submitted to you pursuant to 1997 PA 170, § 9, provides an overview of the review board's functions and program activity details from this past year. Included are data, trend summaries, and observations gleaned by the board during 2015 from the review of cases involving over 1,060 children in foster care.

These reviews were conducted by approximately 180 dedicated and well-trained citizen volunteers. The information obtained from case reviews provides an objective, third-party evaluation of the care that Michigan's foster care system provides to abused and neglected children.

Please feel free to contact Jim Novell, Program Manager for the Foster Care Review Board, at (313) 972-3280 or [NovellJ@courts.mi.gov](mailto:NovellJ@courts.mi.gov) with any questions.

# Mission Statement >>>

The mission of the Foster Care Review Board is to utilize citizen volunteers to review and evaluate permanency planning processes and outcomes for children and families in the Michigan foster care system. Based on the data collected through case review, the Foster Care Review Board advocates for systemic improvements in areas of child safety, timely permanency, and family and child well-being.



## FCRB Program Highlights, Performance, and Data

<a href="#">Program Description</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Annual Report Requirements</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Program Performance</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Program Data</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Program Highlights</a>	
Annual Child Welfare Awards .....	12
Annual Training Conference .....	13
<a href="#">2015 Membership</a> .....	13
 <a href="#">MDHHS Responses to FY2014 Annual FCRB Recommendations</a> .....	 17



# Vision Statement >>>

The Foster Care Review Board will be viewed and valued by the courts, the Department of Health and Human Services, private child-placing agencies, the Legislature, and the citizens of Michigan as a major source of credible data on the performance of the child welfare system. Additionally, citizens of the state will use the data to shape public policy and promote awareness regarding the child foster care system.

## Program Description >>>

The Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) provides independent third-party review of cases in the state child foster care system. The FCRB also hears appeals by foster parents who believe that children are being unnecessarily removed from their care. Established by the Michigan Legislature in 1984, the Foster Care Review Boards Act, MCL 722.131-140, helps ensure that children are safe and well cared for while in the state foster care system, and that their cases are being moved toward permanency in a timely and efficient manner.

The FCRB provides this support by reviewing randomly selected individual foster care cases from each county and providing case-specific recommendations to the family division of the local circuit court, to local offices of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and to contracted agencies. The review process also serves to identify systemic barriers to safety, timely permanency, and child well-being, and to monitor Michigan's compliance with important federal funding requirements.

The FCRB review boards are comprised of citizen volunteers from a variety of professions and backgrounds. FCRB program staff recruit, screen, and train the citizen volunteers on key aspects of the child welfare and foster care systems, including court policy and rules, federal funding requirements, DHHS policy, and state statutes regarding child protection.

Citizen review provides an objective perspective on the foster care case management process. Citizen volunteers donated over 15,000 hours of their time to case review this past year.

This annual report details the efforts of the FCRB during the past year and shares with Michigan's policymakers some of the systemic issues that citizen volunteers have identified while reviewing foster care cases throughout the state.

## Annual Report Requirements >>>

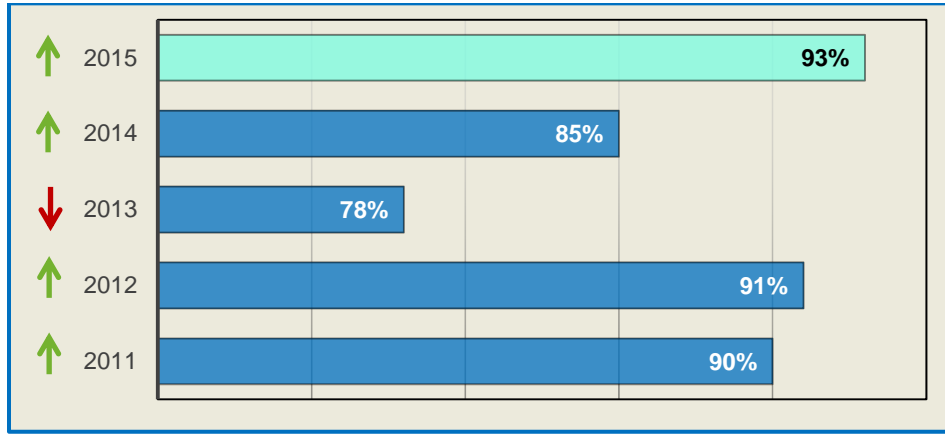
Michigan law, MCL 722.139, requires the State Court Administrative Office to publish an annual report of the FCRB program that includes all of the following information:

- A summary, with applicable quantitative data, of the activities and functioning of each local review board.
- A summary, with applicable quantitative data, of the activities and functioning of the aggregate of all local review boards.
- An identification of problems that impede the timely placement of children in permanent placements, and recommendations for improving the timely placement of children in permanent placements.
- The statistics and findings regarding its reviews of permanent wards, and identification of any barriers to permanency.

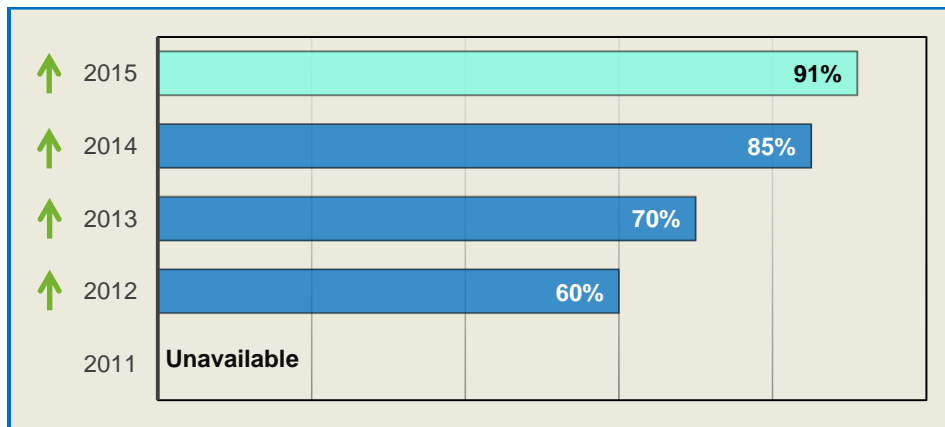


## Program Performance >>>

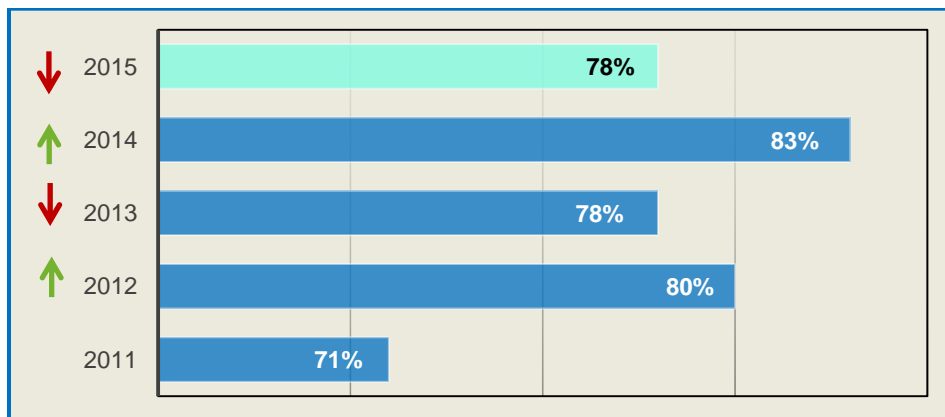
- 1** Percentage of foster parent appeals investigated within seven days, as required by MCL 712A.13b(3):



- 2** Percentage of cases reviewed by local boards consecutively every six months, as required by MCL 722.137(1)(b):



- 3** Percentage of reports distributed to interested parties within 30 days of the review, or prior to the next court hearing, as required by MCL 722.137(1)(b):



## 2015 Program Data >>>

Pursuant to our legislative mandate and mission statement, the Foster Care Review Board collects and evaluates data through case review and appeal hearings. This data is used to advocate for systemic improvements related to child safety, timely permanency, and family and child well-being.

Data collected is centered on the following categories:

- ➔ Barriers to permanency
- ➔ Permanency outcomes
- ➔ Appeal information
- ➔ County review data

**Total review  
hearings held:**  
**850**  
*Involving  
1573 children*



### Barriers to Permanency

Top Statewide Barriers to Permanency
<b>Reunification:</b> Parents unwilling to participate in or utilize services offered
<b>Adoption:</b> Child behavior
<b>Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA):</b> Child behavior
<b>General:</b> Lawyer-Guardian Ad Litem (LGAL) not actively involved in representation of the children
<b>Legal Guardianship:</b> Delay in licensing, home study, or background check on prospective guardian
<b>Placement With Fit and Willing Relative:</b> Child behavior



The chart below identifies the most common barriers to timely achievement of each permanency outcome, grouped by category. Totals represent the number of times specific barriers related to each of the six categories that were identified during the course of FCRB case reviews.

<b>Barriers to Permanency</b>		
<b>Category/Definition</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Counties Most Affected</b>
<b>REUNIFICATION</b>	<b>1193</b>	
Parents unwilling to participate in or utilize services offered	287	Wayne, Genesee, Jackson, Macomb
Parents utilizing but not benefitting from services offered	287	Wayne, Wexford, Barry, Macomb
Parents not participating in parenting time	108	Wayne, Hillsdale, Berrien
Child behavior	81	Wayne, Genesee
Parenting time is not sufficient to support reunification	74	Wayne, Ingham, Oakland
<b>ADOPTION</b>	<b>699</b>	
Child behavior	189	Wayne, Lake, Kalamazoo
Lack of appropriate adoptive home	145	Wayne, Isabella, Jackson
Administrative delays	123	Wayne, Berrien, Lake
Competing parties	84	Wayne, Kent, Gratiot
Parental appeal of termination decision	66	Wayne, Muskegon, Macomb
<b>ANOTHER PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT (APPLA)</b>	<b>253</b>	
Child behavior	77	Wayne, Muskegon
Child does not have adequate independent living skills	55	Wayne, Muskegon, Saginaw
Specific living arrangement not identified	31	Muskegon
Youth does not have identified connection to responsible adult	28	Wayne, Muskegon
Specific living arrangement not established	27	Muskegon
Required documentation not completed, approved by Bureau of Child Welfare	25	Muskegon
<b>GENERAL</b>	<b>159</b>	
LGAL not actively involved in representation of the children	56	Macomb, Ottawa, Mackinac, Mason
Frequent caseworker changes	31	Wayne, Oakland
Plan inappropriate to needs of child	25	Wayne, Shiawassee
Court and agency conflict regarding permanency	23	Wayne
<b>LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP</b>	<b>77</b>	
Delay in licensing, home study, or background check on perspective guardian	21	Wayne
Prospective guardian not equipped to address children's special needs	16	Ottawa, Wayne
Required documentation not completed, approved by Bureau of Child Welfare	16	Wayne
Child behavior	15	Wayne
<b>PLACEMENT WITH A FIT AND WILLING RELATIVE</b>	<b>49</b>	
Child behavior	17	Genesee
Required documentation to approve as permanency plan not completed	11	Wayne



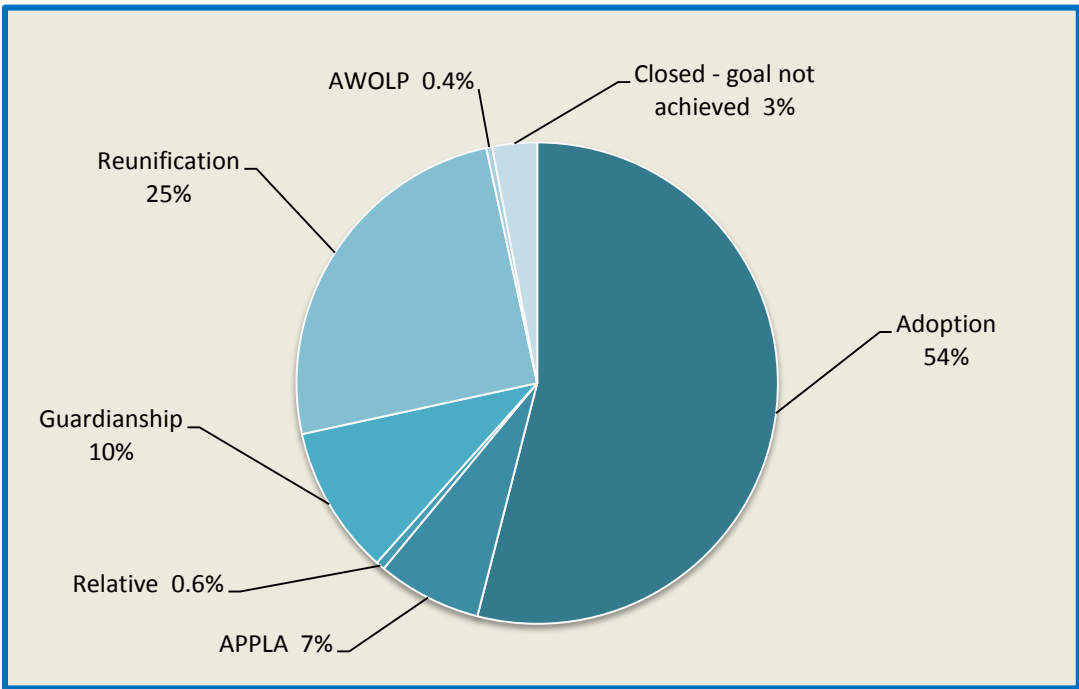
## Permanency Outcomes – Closed Cases

The chart below presents the number of cases reviewed that closed to permanency this past year, along with the permanency outcome, the average days and months from the date the child entered care to permanency, and the average number of placements the child had prior to achievement of the permanency goal.

Permanency outcome	Total cases	Percent of total	Avg days to permanency	Avg months to permanency	Average number of placements
Adoption	171	54 %	964	31	2.5
APPLA*	21	7 %	2446	80	9.8
Fit and willing relative	2	0.6 %	6162	202	9.7
Guardianship	32	10 %	1020	33	2.5
Reunification	77	25 %	561	18	2.4
AWOLP**	1	0.4 %	1935	63	12
Case closed – goal not achieved	10	3%	2694	88	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>2254</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>7.4</b>

\* APPLA - Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

\*\* AWOLP - Absent Without Legal Permission (not an approved permanency goal, but courts sometimes close the case when an older youth is AWOLP)







## Recommendations

FCRB recommendations related to child safety, well-being, and timely permanence are drafted and included in the review report. Although they are not legally binding, the recommendations serve to advise the court and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and its contracted agencies, about concerns noted in the three areas mentioned above, as well as provide timely feedback on the clarity and efficacy of the case service plan.



FCRB recommendations not only highlight areas in need of improvement, but include commendations for excellence and success in the care of a child and in moving the case to timely permanence.

REVIEW BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS (per category)		
	Total	Percent
Safety	660	10%
Well-being	4060	60%
Permanency	2054	30%
Total	6774	100%





## Appeals

Pursuant to 1997 PA 163, MCL 712A.13b, foster parents may appeal the removal of a child or children from their home. Eligible appeals are heard by local foster care review boards, which then either agree or disagree with the child's removal. If the review board **agrees** with the foster parents and determines that the removal was **not** in the child's best interests, the matter is then heard by the court or reviewed by the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) superintendent if the child is an MCI ward.

**Total appeal  
hearings held:  
96  
Involving 171  
children**

APPEAL TOTALS					
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Appeals held: children	171	141	163	89	130
Appeals held: hearings	96	95	97	58	75
Hearings held timely	89	81	76	42	68
Percentage held timely	93%	85%	78%		
Hearings held untimely	7	14	21	16	7
Percentage held untimely	7%	15%	22%		
Appeal intakes	120	117	185	117	114
Ineligible for appeal	10	8	10	59	28
Hearings cancelled	14	14	13	15	11

In 2015, the Foster Care Review Board Program received **120 intake calls** from foster parents who inquired about appealing a removal decision. Local review boards conducted **96 appeal hearings** (some involving several children or one child multiple times in the year), agreeing with the foster parents **50 times** (52 percent) and with the agencies **47 times** (48 percent).<sup>1</sup>

APPEAL OUTCOMES		
	Total	Percent
Board does not support removal	50	52%
MCI does not support removal	4	
MCI does support removal	10	
Court does not support removal	15	
Court does support removal	21	
Board does support removal	47	48%
Total outcomes	97	100%

<sup>1</sup> One appeal hearing with multiple children resulted in multiple outcomes (i.e., the board supported removal for one child, but did not support removal for the other). Thus, although there were 96 actual appeal hearings, there were 97 outcomes.



## County Review Data

County	Case Reviews		Appeal Hearings	
	Total reviews-sibling groups	Cases reviewed	Total appeals – sibling groups	Cases appealed
ALCONA	3	4		
ALGER	2	3		
ALLEGAN	5	9		
ALPENA	5	6		
ANTRIM	4	8		
ARENAC	3	6	1	1
BARAGA	1	4		
BARRY	7	16		
BAY	6	17	2	3
BENZIE	2	2		
BERRIEN	32	57	1	3
BRANCH	6	10	2	3
CALHOUN	20	32	5	8
CASS	7	12	1	1
CHARLEVOIX	2	8		
CHEBOYGAN	3	9		
CHIPPEWA	4	9		
CLARE	3	5		
CLINTON	2	3	1	1
CRAWFORD	4	4		
DELTA	2	4		
DICKINSON	3	3	2	3
EATON	5	10		
EMMET	2	5		
GENESEE	24	47	1	1
GLADWIN	6	10		
GOGEBIC	3	6		
GR. TRAVERSE	6	6	1	1
GRATIOT	8	22		
HILLSDALE	10	18	1	1
HOUGHTON	2	5		
HURON	4	8		
INGHAM	33	45	4	7
IONIA	2	4	2	4
IOSCO	4	8	2	2
IRON	1	1		
ISABELLA	8	16	1	3
JACKSON	18	29	4	6
KALAMAZOO	29	57	3	5
KALKASKA	4	5		
KENT	21	53	10	17
LAKE	6	15		
LAPEER	6	10	1	2

County	Case Reviews		County	
	Total Reviews-Sibling Groups	Cases reviewed	Total appeals – sibling groups	Cases appealed
LEELANAU	1	3		
LENAWEE	10	11		
LIVINGSTON	5	6	1	1
LUCE	1	1		
MACKINAC	3	6		
MACOMB	21	46	2	2
MANISTEE	2	2	2	5
MARQUETTE	5	7		
MASON	4	12		
MECOSTA	4	3		
MENOMINEE	2	5		
MIDLAND	8	8		
MISSAUKEE	4	6		
MONROE	8	13	3	6
MONTCALM	3	4	1	3
MONTMORENCY	4	6		
MUSKEGON	34	70	2	2
NEWAYGO	8	18		
OAKLAND	18	35	8	15
OCEANA	4	9		
OGEMAW	2	4	1	1
ONTONAGON	4	6		
OSCEOLA	4	5		
OSCODA	4	7		
OTSEGO	8	21		
OTTAWA	8	15		
PRESQUE ISLE	3	9		
ROSCOMMON	4	5	1	2
SAGINAW	20	26	1	1
SANILAC	8	14		
SCHOOLCRAFT	2	5		
SHIAWASSEE	8	10		
ST CLAIR	13	23	1	1
ST JOSEPH	5	9	1	1
TUSCOLA	5	11	1	2
VAN BUREN	2	5		
WASHTENAW	21	31	1	1
WAYNE	208	419	24	55
WEXFORD	4	18		
UNKNOWN	40	48	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>1573</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>171</b>

## 2015 Program Highlights >>



### Annual Child Welfare Awards

These awards are presented at our annual conference every November to formally recognize outstanding work by child welfare professionals.

We again congratulate the 2015 winners!



**Front, from left:** Diane Tryan, Annette E. Skinner, Elizabeth Warner, Hon. Patricia D. Gardner, Tisha Estes

**Rear, from left:** Zachary Estes, Hon. Milton Mack, Jr., James Novell

#### Foster Care Caseworker of the Year

**Diane Tryan**

Catholic Social Services, Escanaba

#### Lawyer-Guardian ad Litem of the Year

**Annette E. Skinner**

Annette E. Skinner, PLLC, Lansing

#### Parent Attorney of the Year

**Elizabeth Warner**

Law Office of Elizabeth Warner, Jackson

#### Jurist of the Year

**Hon. Patricia D. Gardner**

17<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Family Division, Kent County

#### Foster Parents of the Year

**Tisha and Zachary Estes**

Methodist Children's Center, Detroit

**2015**

**Press Release:**

[http://courts.mi.gov/New-Events/press\\_releases/](http://courts.mi.gov/New-Events/press_releases/)



## Annual Training Conference

The 2015 FCRB Annual Training Conference was a one-day event held on November 5 in Lansing. Entitled “The Odyssey of Foster Care: The Alumni Perspective,” it was planned and presented by the Michigan Chapter of the Foster Care Alumni of America, whose members have previous experience with the foster care system and act as a collective voice for all children in foster care.

Conference sessions were moderated by Robert Thomas, the chapter’s former president and current member of the Foster Care Review Board Advisory Committee. Sessions included both individual presentations and panelist discussions, all of which had the



common objective of allowing men and women who had successfully transitioned from foster care to adulthood to share their experiences, explain how those experiences shaped who they are today, and inform us what they believe can be done to help achieve healthy and hopeful futures for children presently in the system.

Board members commented in their conference evaluations that they found the presentations to be moving, enlightening, and pertinent to their review of foster care cases.



## Volunteer Membership

The Foster Care Review Board would like to express its appreciation and gratitude to our volunteer board members throughout the state for their time and dedication in helping to ensure that children are safe and well cared for while in the state foster care system and that their cases are being moved toward permanency in a timely and efficient manner.

On the following pages you will find two lists: local county review board members and FCRB Advisory Committee members. These lists include all currently active members and those who were active as of December 31, 2015.





FCRB Review Board Members			
County	Name-Year	County	Name-Year
Alger	Rose Wilbur (2008)	Iosco	Alan Gould (2010)
Allegan	Michael Kiella (2015)	Iosco	Vera Middleton (2012)
Allegan	Jamie Walle (2015)	Iron	Sawyer Saint Andrews (2016)
Antrim	Susan Manturuk-Gielda (2005)	Isabella	Frederick Puffenberger (2011)
Barry	Ronald Heilman (2008)	Jackson	Diana Liechty (2008)
Barry	Carol Stanton (2008)	Jackson	Linda Nelson (2016)
Benzie	Rebecca Rogan (2011)	Jackson	Susan Richardson (2014)
Berrien	Lenore Becker (2012)	Jackson	Harold White (2008)
Berrien	Joan Smith (2008)	Kalamazoo	Linda Dunn (2010)
Berrien	Mary Spessard (2011)	Kalamazoo	Cheryl Nebedum (2012)
Berrien	Kathie Stancik (2016)	Kalamazoo	Sally Putney (2004)
Branch	Michael Ronzone (2007)	Kalamazoo	Mary Roberts (2011)
Branch	Lucinda Wakeman (2005)	Kalamazoo	Lisa Rodriguez (2012)
Cadillac	Barbara Russ (2013)	Kalamazoo	Brandon Youngblood (2015)
Calhoun	Marylou Bax (2014)	Kent	Jan Foxen (2004)
Calhoun	Arlen Facey (2010)	Kent	Merrill Graham-Armstrong
Calhoun	Amy Wichterman (2015)	Kent	Daniel Groce (1995)
Cass	Jill Ernest (2008)	Kent	Vernon Laninga (2000)
Cass	James Rutten (1999)	Kent	Jacqueline Rudolph (2007)
Charlevoix	Martha Thorpe ()	Lapeer	Jerry Webb (2013)
Chippewa	Doris Posey (2012)	Lenawee	Rebecca Cole (2016)
Clare	Donald Murray (2008)	Lenawee	Jonathan Hale (2006)
Clinton	Michael Kessler (2007)	Livingston	Marcia Jablonski (2016)
Clinton	Janet Olsen (2016)	Livingston	Lori Musson (2014)
Crawford	Laurie Jamison (2015)	Macomb	Edna Chang (2009)
Eaton	Nancy Martin (2016)	Macomb	Elayne Gray (2006)
Emmet	Kenda Deschermeier (2008)	Macomb	Angie Greenslade (1996)
Emmet	Jean Frentz (2011)	Macomb	Eugene Groesbeck (2000)
Genesee	Shawn Bryson (2012)	Macomb	Rosemary Sear (2006)
Genesee	Quincy Dobbs (2011)	Macomb	Helen Springer (2011)
Genesee	Lauretta Montini (2009)	Macomb	Lynda Steele (2005)
Genesee	Toyonna Robbins (2011)	Manistee	Gary Madden (2006)
Genesee	Laura Shephard (2013)	Marquette	Glenn Wing (2007)
Genesee	Gordon Sherman (2009)	Mason	Alice Jones (2015)
Genesee	Neita Sudberry (2016)	Mason	Susan Zahrobsky (2014)
Hillsdale	Martha Crow (2001)	Mecosta	Brenda Hall (2015)
Hillsdale	Diane Langan (2011)	Midland	Colin Buell (2011)
Huron	Jon Fruytier (2010)	Midland	Stephen Ignatowski (2005)
Ingham	Charles Foster (2010)	Monroe	Frederick Corser, Jr. (2000)
Ingham	Julie Loveless (2008)	Monroe	Thomas Perry (2010)
Ingham	Kristina Marshall (2005)	Montmorency	Mary Jo Guest (2010)
Ingham	Cheryl Mask (2005)	Montmorency	David Smith (2012)
Ingham	David Shorter (2012)	Muskegon	Janice Hilleary (2012)
Ingham	Stephanie Williams (2007)	Muskegon	Edward Holovka (2001)



FCRB Review Board Members (cont.)			
County	Name-Year	County	Name-Year
Muskegon	Todd Rake (2015)	Wayne	Johnette Connors (2011)
Muskegon	Benedict Schramski (2014)	Wayne	Janice Cowan (2011)
Newaygo	Larry Feikema (2002)	Wayne	Tonie Dance (1998)
Oakland	Carol Borich (1996)	Wayne	Clara Dawkins (2010)
Oakland	Cassandra Chandler (2006)	Wayne	Marvin Dick (2004)
Oakland	Janet Evans-Covington (2011)	Wayne	Katrina Dixon (2011)
Oakland	Ayana Knox-Potts (2014)	Wayne	George Eason (2002)
Oakland	William Liverman (2016)	Wayne	Michael Eberth (2001)
Oakland	Kay Norton (2011)	Wayne	Tisha Estes (2014)
Oakland	Gary Shripka (2011)	Wayne	Laura Fabbri-Tucker (2015)
Oakland	Darnita Stein (1997)	Wayne	Brenda Godfrey (1998)
Osceola	Janice Booher (2009)	Wayne	Michael Greene (2013)
Ottawa	Dennis Schaaf (2009)	Wayne	Dolores Harold (2014)
Ottawa	Susan Thorpe (2012)	Wayne	Warren K. Harrison (2005)
Saginaw	Ruth Averill (2014)	Wayne	Jonas Hill, Sr. (2001)
Saginaw	Ann Densmore (2014)	Wayne	David L. Hunt (2006)
Saginaw	Anna Mayer (2014)	Wayne	Darryl V. Hunter (2001)
Saginaw	Shirley Norman (2005)	Wayne	Yvette Jenkins (2005)
Saginaw	Willie Owens (2007)	Wayne	Michelle Lenning (2015)
Saginaw	Jerry Schlicker (2012)	Wayne	Sondai Lester (2015)
Shiawassee	Jorja Ackels (2000)	Wayne	Darryl Lewis (2011)
Shiawassee	Jacob Drenovsky (2006)	Wayne	Judy Mock (2009)
Shiawassee	Lynn Nee (2011)	Wayne	Lashawna Morman (2016)
St. Clair	Brendan Aspenson (2010)	Wayne	Don Novak (2008)
St. Clair	Kathryn Bruer (1991)	Wayne	Elizabeth Oliver (1988)
St. Clair	Robert Goldenbogen (2000)	Wayne	Anitta Orr (2009)
St. Joseph	Margaret Hale-Smith (2015)	Wayne	Marilyn Remillard (2015)
St. Joseph	Betty Taylor (2008)	Wayne	Margarita Ross Price (2000)
Tuscola	Gary Holik (2006)	Wayne	Edna Samuel (2013)
Van Buren	Jennifer Carpio-Zeller (1999)	Wayne	Nancy Silveri (2011)
Van Buren	Meryl Greene (2008)	Wayne	Edward Sims (2014)
Van Buren	Jan M. Jones (2011)	Wayne	Jennifer R. Smith (2014)
Washtenaw	Vanisha Dejonghe (2013)	Wayne	Rita Smythe (2009)
Washtenaw	Jessica Gilbert (2015)	Wayne	Willie Stanley (1997)
Washtenaw	Marion Hoey (2003)	Wayne	Ellen Stephens (1997)
Washtenaw	Gayle Stewart (2000)	Wayne	Jessica Strachan (2016)
Wayne	Tanya Bankston (2016)	Wayne	Mark Sweetman (2014)
Wayne	Cleo F. Biles (2016)	Wayne	Carol Terpak (2005)
Wayne	Brenda Boyd (1990)	Wayne	Penny Thomas (2015)
Wayne	Michele Calloway (2016)	Wayne	Claudia Yates (2009)
Wayne	Willie Cambell (2001)		

## FCRB Advisory Committee Members

Name	Title, Organization	Name	Title, Organization
Casey Anbender	Mgmt. Analyst, Child Welfare	Courtney Maher	Foster Care Alumni, County
Brenda Baker-Mbacke'	FCRB Program Representative	Hon. Karen McDonald	Circuit Court Judge, Oakland County
Stacie Bladen	Deputy Director, Children's Services Agency, DHHS	Rubina Mustafa	Screening Specialist, Detroit Center for Family Advocacy
Carol Borich	Board #11, Oakland County	James Novell	FCRB Program Manager
Hon. Karen Braxton	Circuit Court Judge, 3rd Judicial Circuit Court, Family Division	Thomas Perry	Board #15, Monroe County
Jeanette Bridges	FCRB Program Representative	Seth Persky	Director, DHHS Office of the Family
Steve Currie	Michigan Assoc. of Counties	Kadi Prout	Director of Child Welfare Policy, MI
Marvin Dick	Board #1, Wayne County	Joi Rencher	Independent Living Skills Coordinator, MAGIC Program, EMU
Quincy Dobbs	Board #13, Genesee County	Janet Reynolds Snyder	Executive Director, MI Federation for Children & Families
George Eason	Board # 5, Wayne County	Susan Richardson	Board #17, Jackson County
Michael Eberth	Board # 9, Wayne County	Kellie Robb	FCRB Program Representative
Jill Ernest	Board #25, Cass County	Lisa Rodriguez	Board #22, Kalamazoo County
Sarah Goad	Manager, Foster Care Program	Patty Sabin	Executive Director, Michigan CASA
Elayne Gray	Board # 12, Macomb County	Nancy Silveri	Board #4, Wayne County
Jonathan Hale	Board # 17, Lenawee County	Jennifer R. Smith	Board #7, Wayne County
Warren K. Harrison	Board # 8, Wayne County	Hon. Robert Sykes	Probate Court Judge, Ionia County Probate Court
Orlene Hawks	Director, Office of the Children's Ombudsman	Robert Thomas	President Foster Care Alumni of America, MI Chapter
Elizabeth Henderson	Mgmt. Analyst, Child Welfare Services, SCAO	Kristin Totten	Attorney at Law, Law Office of Kristin Totten
Terri Henrizi	Education Coordinator, Assoc. for Children's Mental Health	Kelly Wagner	Director, Child Welfare Services, SCAO
Yvette Jenkins	Board #3, Wayne County	Lucinda Wakeman	Board # 20, Branch County
Mary Johnson	Independent Consultant, County	Jerry Webb	Board #14, Lapeer County
Ruth Kenaga	President, MAFAK	Addie Williams	Executive Director, Spaulding for
Vernon Laninga	Board #21, Kent County	Claudia Yates	Board #5, Wayne County
Su Lantz	Exec Legal Assistant, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa		
Julie Loveless	Board #16, Ingham County		

## MDHHS Responses to FY2014 Annual Foster Care Review Board Recommendations >>>

The 2014 FCRB Annual Report focused on concerns related to Michigan's high rate of caseworker turnover and its adverse impact on the court's processing of a case and the achievement of positive outcomes for children in the areas of safety, well-being, and timeliness to permanency. Outlined through data and research were a number of factors that contribute to worker turnover, including inadequate preparation and training for the multifaceted demands of this work; overwhelming workloads and administrative responsibilities; inadequate supervision and support in managing factors related to burnout and secondary trauma; low pay and incentives that are inconsistent with the stressful and critical nature of the work; and organizational climates that exacerbate the already stressful nature of the work.

The following research-based recommendations were made to address these concerns:

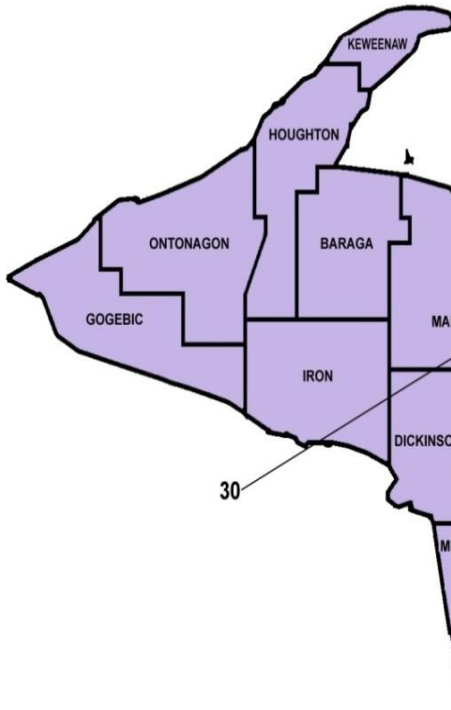
1. **We recommend** that the DHHS and its contracted child placing agencies review and evaluate its administrative policies and hiring practices in relationship to stabilizing the foster care caseworker workforce overall and reducing the number of caseworkers assigned to an individual case.
2. **We recommend** the DHHS and private child placing agencies require and ensure that supervisors have the training, experience, and ability to assist caseworkers with skill development and problem solving, and provide them with the social and emotional support necessary to manage the substantial personal and professional stressors that are inherent to this work.
3. **We recommend** that the DHHS collaborate with the Michigan Federation for Children and Families in developing a confidential job satisfaction survey of caseworkers related to evaluating agency organizational culture and climate as a means of identifying and instituting both systemic and individual agency improvements in these areas.
4. **We recommend** that the Michigan Legislature work with the DHHS and representatives from private child placing agencies to establish equity in pay and benefits for foster care caseworkers throughout the system.
5. **We recommend** that the DHHS establish contracts with all county prosecutor offices and/or the Michigan Attorney General's office to ensure all MDHHS and private agency caseworkers have legal representation when in court.
6. **We recommend** the Legislature require DHHS to maintain specific data and information related to foster care caseworker turnover.
7. **We recommend** that the DHHS and its local county offices collaborate with SCAO and the local courts to ensure that caseworkers are adequately trained to competently and confidently present before the court.

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DHHS advised in a formal response to these recommendations that a number of actions were or would be taken to reduce caseworker turnover and stabilized its workforce in order to improve outcomes for children and families served by our state foster care system. Initiatives include the following:

- An Internship Placement Program was developed in collaboration with in-state college social work programs to provide students an opportunity to determine if child welfare work was suited to their professional goals and talents.
- A pilot program in eight continues to develop effective responses to secondary trauma experienced by caseworkers.
- Increased training for supervisors related to providing a more reflective model of supervision.
- Collaborate with the Michigan Federation for Children and Families to develop a job satisfaction survey for caseworkers; evaluation of the results of those surveys will guide related system and agency improvements.
- Assess third-party evaluation of pay equity between the public and private sector.
- Establish a Prosecuting Attorney Advocacy Council to assess ways in which legal representation of child welfare staff in court proceedings can be strengthened.
- Improve data collection regarding factors impacting caseworker turnover.
- Collaborate with SCAO and local counties in preparing caseworkers to effectively and confidently present in court.
- Contract with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for a workload study to determine appropriate caseload size.

# MICHIGAN'S FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARDS



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